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Harvard probing CIA grant

By Richard Higgins
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Harvard officials are investigating whether the director of the university's Center for Middle Eastern Studies improperly accepted a \$50,000 grant from the Central Intelligence Agency to finance a conference on Islamic fundamentalism.

Professor Nadav Safran acknowledged yesterday that he "sought and obtained" CIA funds "as an independent contractor" for the conference, but he declined to comment further until university officials "complete their inquiry."

Harvard officials said any impropriety would stem not from the acceptance of the

Michael Spence, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences. Spence said he had begun an investigation.

The closed two-day conference, which was expected to attract about 90 scholars from this country and the Middle East, was set for early next week.

At issue is whether Safran complied with rules that require Harvard professors to report outside grants to their faculty deans, to accept only those grants that can be publicly disclosed and, in some cases, to share half to two-thirds of the grant money with the university.

Faculty of arts and sciences guidelines also prohibit secret or classified research.

A senior Harvard official said privately yesterday that there was doubt that Safran fully complied with the university's rules.

George Lauder, chief spokesman for the CIA, said, "The proper posture for us would be to defer comment on the matter to Safran and to Harvard."

It was also learned yesterday that Safran recently accepted \$107,430 from the CIA to help fund the research and writing of his book, "Saudi Arabia, The Ceaseless Quest for Security," published last month by Harvard University Press. A copy of the CIA contract providing the funding, dated April 13, 1982 and signed by Safran, was obtained by the Globe.

Safran would not comment on the financing of the book, which deals with Saudi defense, foreign and security policies. Nowhere in the preface, text or appendix is mention made of CIA support, although Safran's text does acknowledge help from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rand Corp. and several graduate students.

Spence, informed of the contract last night, said that he would expand his probe to include the funding of the book.

John Shattuck, vice president for public affairs at Harvard, said the inquiry centers on university rules requiring "administrative sanction in advance" for any research agreement with an external sponsor.

In an interview with the Globe Tuesday, the Egyptian-born Safran, who is Murray A. Albertson professor of Middle Eastern studies, said reporters would be barred from the conference because of the need for "free and open academic exchange" on the subject of resurgent Islamic fundamentalism. He said he could not disclose who was coming to the conference or its exact scope, but that he would when the conference was over.

"It is closed to the press because we have guests from overseas, Moslem and Arab... and we want to have uninhibited academic discussion," he said.

Safran also said Tuesday the sponsorship must remain confidential; yesterday, however, he acknowledged the CIA support.

Safran, who holds a doctorate and has been at Harvard for about 20 years, is also the author of "Israel, Our Embattled Ally."

In Wednesday's editions of the Harvard Crimson, Safran was quoted as saying did not share the grant with Harvard because he arranged the conference on his own rather than on behalf of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. He also was quoted as saying he had successfully avoided sharing any part of a similar grant he received last year for a conference on the Persian Gulf.

"I did not do it through the center because of the 60 percent ...



NADAV SAFRAN
Received \$50,000 grant

grant, but Safran's apparent failure to notify the university before accepting it.

"Questions regarding the sponsorship of a conference at the center have come to my attention and are a matter of serious concern to me," said A. Mi-

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and all the red tape," Safran was quoted as saying.

In an interview yesterday, Safran accused the Crimson of making "gross distortions" but declined to confirm or deny specific quotations.

He issued the following statement:

"Interesting idea"

"I conceived of an interesting idea for a CMES [Center for Middle

Eastern Studies] conference about an intellectually compelling subject. As CMES proceeded with preparations, I sought and obtained funds from the CIA as an 'independent contractor,' which would permit me to reimburse CMES for expenses incurred."

Several Middle Eastern scholars reached yesterday said they were unaware of the CIA funding of the conference and surprised by Safran's handling of the matter.

Professor Nur Yalman, director

of the center from 1974 to 1977, said "a number of Middle Eastern governments offered large sums of money that we turned down because we felt such funds might interfere with the goals of free academic inquiry."

"In general, I think it well to steer away from the CIA as a funding source, not only because of the potential conflict of interest, but because of the effect it is likely to have on scholars coming from the Middle East," he added. "They

might come with a false understanding that such a conference was funded by disinterested and unbiased parties, and when they discover otherwise it could be quite dangerous for them."

Dennis N. Skiotis, associate director of the center from 1976 until last year, called the CIA funding of the conference "wrong ... especially in a volatile field like the Middle East. When I was there, we had a firm policy about not taking this kind of money."